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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 IMR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0304
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EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: MPOL, KS
SUBJECT: ROK DEFENSE POLICY AS DISCUSSED BY MINISTER SO

1. IN APPEARANCE BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEFENSE COMMITTEE OCTOBER 29, MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENSE SO CHONG-CHOL DENIED ANY ROKG INTENT TO DEVELOP NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AFFIRMED CONTINUING TRIPARTITE ROK/US/JAPAN MILITARY COOPERATION, AND SAID AIRCRAFT ENTERING RESTRICTED AIRSPACE OVER SEOUL WOULD CONTINUE TO DRAW WARNING SHOTS. LATTER POINT MORE FULLY COVERED SEPTEL. MAIN POINTS SO'S STATEMENT AS COVERED IN ROK PRESS AS FOLLOWS.

2. ASKED ABOUT PLANS FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT, SO SAID "WE HAVE NO INTENTION WHATEVER TO CONSIDER ANY PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS OF OUR OWN." HE NOTED THAT "THE NORTH KOREAN REGIME HAS NOT AS YET REACHED THE STAGE OF DEVELOPING NUCLEAR WEAPONS ITSELF THOUGH IT HAS MEANS OF LAUNCHING NUCLEAR WEAPONS."

3. IN RESPONSE TO REMARKS BY NDP REPRESENTATIVE SONG WON-YONG, URGING TRIPARTITE ALLIANCE OF ROK, U.S. AND JAPAN,

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SO SAID "THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN AND STRENGTHEN TRIPARTITE MILITARY COOPERATION AMONG KOREA, THE U.S. AND JAPAN IN CONSIDERATION OF THE KOREA-U.S. DEFENSE TREATY AND THE U.S.-JAPAN MUTUAL SECURITY PACT."

4. IN ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION, SO SAID THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCUSSION WHATSOEVER BETWEEN SEOUL AND WASHINGTON ABOUT U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL.

5. THE ROK ACCORDING DEFMIN IS "FULLY CAPABLE OF DEFENDING SEOUL FROM ANY NORTH KOREAN ATTACK AND ... STRATEGIES HAVE BEEN WORKED OUT TO THIS END BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES." HE ADDED THAT SUFFICIENT AMOUNTS OF FOOD AND DAILY NECESSITIES HAVE BEEN SECURED FOR THE SEOUL POPULACE.

6. SO STATED THAT AIRCRAFT ENTERING THE RESTRICTED AIR-SPACE OVER SEOUL WILL CONTINUE TO DRAW WARNING SHOTS AND "WE WILL CONTINUE TO SHOOT DOWN SUCH AIRCRAFT IF THEY DO NOT LEAVE THE RESTRICTED AREA IN SPITE OF WARNING SHOTS."

7. COMMENT: SO'S REMARKS ON TRIPARTITE DEFENSE COOPERATION ARE MORE POSITIVE THAN PRIME MINISTER CHOE'S NEGATIVE RESPONSE ON THE SUBJECT DURING INTERPELLATIONS EARLY IN OCTOBER (SEOUL 7977, PARA 8). AS REGARDS FIRING ON AIRCRAFT IN SEOUL AIRSPACE, DESPITE SO'S STATE-MENTS, ROKG HAS MADE IMPORTANT CHANGES IN PROCEDURES AND WE ANTICIPATE FURTHER EFFORTS TO REDUCE RISK OF SHOOTING DOWN ERRANT FRIENDLY CRAFT. (SEPTEL)
SNEIDER

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